

VZCZCXRO9588
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHKU #2478/01 1751420
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 241420Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5376
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA// IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 002478

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,
B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
LONDON FOR TSOU
PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [IR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS

TODAY'S TOPICS:

- ELECTION SLOGANS
- A MESSAGE TO VOTERS
- YOUTH REVOLUTION
- A CHANGE OF MIND
- WOMEN AS A WEAPON TO FIGHT CORRUPTION
- IS THIS DEMOCRACY? (Full translation)

Block Quotes

Saturday, June 24, 2006

1. Secretary General of Kuwait's Journalists Association, Mr. Faisal Al-Qanai suggested a new election strategy, "Let's take it back to what it used to be." In his daily column in pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah that carried the same headline Mr. Qanai proposed, "The election campaign slogan of candidate Marzook Al-Ghanim 'Let us take it back to what it used to be' carries within it beautiful meanings, and at the same time reminds us of our disgraceful reality when we deserted our beautiful Kuwaiti values that used to bring people together.... Kuwait used to be a pioneer in politics, economy, socially, culturally, and in sports and art. We used to be the model for neighboring countries, whose leaders looked upon us with envy and astonishment. We need to recalculate and reorganize our priorities. The government must put in place a comprehensive development plan that carries the headline 'let us take it back to what it used to be.'"

2. Kuwaiti writer Mr. Zubn Al-Bathal headlined his article in pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah "a letter to voters." The letter of Mr. Al-Zubn advised women, "My sisters and fellow women voters: 'You represent a large number that outweighs men; that is why your choice must be right and unbiased. You should not be swayed to vote based on tribal, clan, family, or sect loyalties. You should only vote for the qualified, and the best. You should only vote for who you think is going to be good for our country and people.'"

3. Headline "We Want it One," an article by columnist Dr. Sami Nasser Khalifah in the independent Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam opined, "The coalition grouping changed its election slogan from 'We Want it Five' to 'We Want it Coalition', which signifies the importance of collective work in bringing large number of same minded candidates to the parliament. We now ask, why not change it to 'We Want it One?'.... Kuwait now needs an election bylaw that guarantees equal representation to all, and gives a equal opportunity to members of every residential district of the country. We need a law that would not lose its effectiveness when the

population of Kuwait expands. Thus, an election system that supports one district would not contradict with the core of our constitution that guarantees our genuine Kuwaiti values: fairness, equality, and equal representation."

¶4. Under the headline "I will vote for Waleed," Editor-in-Chief of independent Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam Mr. Jassem Boodai editorialized, "This election surprised everyone by its timing, length of period, the circumstances that surround it and even the reasons that lead to calling an election, and the political ammunition that has been used in it. Voters are more lost and confused than the candidates.... If I put myself in the candidate's shoes, I would be confused and undecided as well. Everyone is talking the same talk, except for one man who was an exception to that rule. This man has put the interest of Kuwait before his own and took the right decision at the right time. Mr. Waleed Al-Jari was a knight who dismounted a leading horse when he felt that real objectives have been lost.... Mr. Waleed Al-Jari, from now until Election Day and beyond, we will look for people like you to vote for; nevertheless, your withdrawal from the race had the greatest impact in all election campaign headquarters."

¶5. Saud Al-Samaka, a liberal academic and columnist in the daily moderate Al-Qabas, wrote an article under the headline, "Youth of Kuwait Unite" where he encourages Kuwaiti men and women, stating "This political awakening movement must proceed regardless of the election results. If we as the political powers in this country want to lead Kuwait onto the right path, we must encourage and support this youth awakening and political awareness, which represents a turning point in our history. Today, I am repeating what I had said in previous columns; the ball is now in the young people's court. They are the ones who should work together and continue to do so for their future, and the future of their children, and for Kuwait. Youth of Kuwait unite and become a force of action and reform."

KUWAIT 00002478 002 OF 003

¶6. Political activist in women's issues Ms. Iqbal Al-Ahmed criticized in progressive Arabic daily Al-Qabas, "When some candidates were asked why they segregated women in their election campaigns, and sometimes screened their presentations to an audience of women on pre-recorded tapes, they replied: 'We are trying to save our sisters the trouble of having to come to our diwanis. In addition, the majority of our sisters wear veils, which make it uncomfortable to sit in this hot weather and listen to speeches.' To those people I say, if this is your excuse, then you had better print what you wanted to say on pamphlets and distribute them to all women in Kuwait, so that they could read your election program in the comfort of their homes. At his election campaign headquarters former MP Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabaei clarified his previous position that opposed the appointment of Dr. Masouma Al-Mubarak to the council of ministers saying, 'Our decision was based on constitutional grounds, and not on religious convictions. At that time the lady minister's name was unlisted on election lists.' It is strange to hear Dr. Tabtabaei say that now, when back during the voting on the appointment he used to say, 'giving a woman ministerial position meant giving her general sovereignty, an action that is banned by Shariah and Islamic laws.'... Today Islamists need the votes of women in their alleged fight against corruption; therefore we see that their positions have changed. The same woman, who yesterday was considered by them to be unfit mentally and physically to practice politics, today has become their weapon with which they will fight corruption!"

Full Translation

¶7. Under the banner "Is this a true democracy?" Editor-in-Chief of pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah and English-language Arab Times Mr. Ahmed Al-Jarallah editorialized, "Ever since HH the Amir issued a decree to dissolve the National Assembly and even before dissolution of the Parliament was officially announced, the government has been on the receiving end of some vicious accusations and harsh criticism, which won't end until June 29, 2006, Election Day. During their election campaigns, almost every candidate has accused the government of selling Kuwait through the Northern

Oilfields project and jeopardizing the country's natural resources and the future of its citizens by allowing foreign companies to steal the nation's wealth leaving only some small pennies for the citizens.

¶18. Some pessimistic candidates have accused the government of helping the rich become richer and closing the doors in the face of citizens with limited incomes. Soon others may go around wearing T-shirts bearing the slogan 'Donate to poor Kuwaitis,' to paint a bleak future for citizens. Almost all candidates have blamed the government for the deterioration of medical and educational services offered to the people of Kuwait.

¶19. A citizen has criticized the government for the demise of his friend, who died while he was being taken to a medical center as the first polyclinic to which he was taken was closed. Even the current water shortage in the country is being exploited by some candidates to blame the government. A candidate described the water shortage as 'an artificial crisis created to help the thieves at the Energy Ministry.' A former MP, an Islamist who is competing in the elections, said 'the government has created a shortage as a part of its preparations to sign a deal to get water from Iran.'

¶10. We wonder what kind of government would allow its citizens to go thirsty and suffer from unhealthy conditions to import water from another country for a few million dinars.... If these dangerous accusations are true and supported with incontrovertible proof, then the concerned officials should be tried immediately to ensure they receive suitable punishment.

¶11. Amidst all these accusations what is intriguing is the strange silence being maintained by the government. The official spokesman of the Information Ministry has not responded to any of these accusations except the one over the closure of satellite TV channels. Maybe he has chosen to counter this accusation as it specifically concerns the Information Ministry. As a result citizens are confused and do not know whom to trust for their future.

¶12. Citizens are in a dilemma, because we will be in a crisis if the candidates are liars. On the other hand, the situation will be even worse if the candidates are not lying and what they say is true. This means citizens can't trust the government, not only the current one but also all the earlier governments and the future ones. If

KUWAIT 00002478 003 OF 003

what the candidates are saying is true, all the past, present and future governments really should be held responsible for destroying the lives of citizens. If the accusations of the candidates are true, the government will remain accused of stealing the nation's wealth day in and day out.

¶13. Why does the government remain silent when its reputation is being tarnished? Why is its official spokesman not explaining, defending, or clarifying the situation? In a democratic country such as the United States, the official spokesman of the White House or the State Department could not ignore such an issue, even if it were published by a newspaper with a miniscule circulation or contained in a videotape sent by bin Laden or his deputy Al-Zawahari. The U.S. administration wouldn't dare allow any such criticism to pass without offering a proper explanation, because it is committed not only to its citizens, but also to the entire world.

¶14. While the U.S. government believes in revealing facts to identify the truth, in Kuwait it appears there is a 'gentleman's agreement' between the government and candidates. This agreement allows election candidates to level all kinds of accusations against officials, while the government acts deaf or pretends the charges are directed at someone else. All citizens have realized the government and candidates have a hidden deal. As a result they don't care for these meaningless accusations.

¶15. However, they don't mind listening to them as a pastime. We must reconsider and re-evaluate such dangerous political practices. We have to reexamine many simple and common practices that are

dominating our political life and then ask ourselves: is this a true democracy?"

***** *

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
[http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable%20s)

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

***** **

TUELLER